



Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Monday, April 6, 2020

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

In attendance: Ezekiel Wheeler, Heather Barber, Mike Rademacher, Darcy Devney, Alyson Fletcher, Jenny Raitt, Daniel Amstutz, Doug Mayo-Wells, Julie Wayman, Ali Carter, Len Diggins, Kristine Shah, Rachael Stark, Matt Smith, Phil Goff.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction to Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

Daniel Amstutz read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

2. Public Comments.

There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes from January 13, 2020.

Minutes were approved.

4. Project Status Update.

Matt Smith from Nelson\Nygaard gave an update on the work to date on the Sustainable Transportation Plan. Smith started by going over maps showing existing conditions of where different ages and income groups of people live, work, and travel in and near Arlington.

Smith discussed a number of maps displaying demographic information, including locations of various age groups (children and elderly in particular), household income, locations of household renters and owners, and locations of

jobs inside Arlington and where Arlington residents work. He also showed characteristics of the street network, such as street slopes, bicycle facilities, and the location of public transit routes. Residents are able to walk, bike, and take public transit to local amenities and jobs – which are mostly concentrated in Cambridge and downtown Boston – but public transit service to reach other adjacent communities is lacking. A higher percentage of high income Arlington residents with younger kids live near the Red Line and bus lines on Mass Ave and work in Cambridge and Boston; there are fewer in the hills and the more sprawling parts of town. Some lower income residents have easier access to amenities than higher income residents who live in the hills.

Rachael Stark noted that many people do take the bus within Arlington to shop and run errands, even though that bus service can be unreliable. If bus service were more frequent, appealing, and reliable, it is likely that more people would use the bus for shopping and errand trips within Arlington. She also noted that the Minuteman Bikeway is used by many pedestrians and is the only safe walking route from most of Arlington to the Red Line at Alewife. Many people walk to shopping and errands, the library, Town Hall, Post Office, parks and more. Smith commented that the hills of Arlington are a major determinant of how people travel, and those who live in the hilliest areas are much more likely to drive than those who live in the flatter areas.

Smith noted they are using 2018 American Community Survey data to get down to the block group level.

Phil Goff asked about data on pedestrian infrastructure and traffic crashes of people who were bicycling and walking. He noted that there should be focus on locations where crashes occur and pedestrian crossings are absent. Smith explained they are still getting this data ready and are working on mapping it. Amstutz noted he has provided various data to Nelson\Nygaard that the Town has available.

Jenny Raitt noted a need to include in the data and maps “connections to connections” and “first mile, last mile” for bikes and walking. What sidewalks, bike path, bus routes connect to farther connections to surrounding communities? She also noted a need to look at how parking can encourage or discourage multi-modal travel for different trips. Amstutz added that understanding the connection between parking and zoning – how high parking requirements in town may encourage more driving and more space for off-street parking – is an important issue to understand. Smith noted that, in general, a high parking ratio in zoning will encourage more driving.

Smith highlighted the high level of transit usage in Arlington: 20%, greater than comparable communities, despite the fact that there is no subway stop within the borders of Arlington. Stark commented that there is a need for different options in Arlington, such as shuttles, to access the Red Line at Alewife Station.

5. Engagement Strategy Overview.

Alyson Fletcher went over the engagement strategy for the Sustainable Transportation Plan. She noted that this strategy may need to be adapted due to physical distancing requirements and other limitations resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

Fletcher noted that the engagement strategy should: build awareness of and excitement for the plan; reach a variety of constituents and community interests to create recommendations that are comprehensive and equitable; and inform plan priorities and actions. The Town will assist with the public outreach via project website (the Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee page), social media and press releases, and fliers and postcards. The Advisory Committee's role in the engagement will be to maximize knowledge from many perspectives, do outreach to community to get people to show up, and run "Plan in a Box" meetings. Due to the coronavirus, the team is now more dependent on committee members doing outreach, sending information out and gathering information back. In-person events such as the public forums and mobile workshops may need to shift. An online survey is being developed and focus groups are planned, which may need to be virtual.

Fletcher started a discussion about the survey for the plan. She noted a need to ask questions that are not well captured by Census data. The committee discussed the difficulty of reaching residents over age 60 who do not have computers or smartphones, and there was discussion of phone banking as an option to reach this group. Postal mail was another option brought up as a way to reach low-income and other underserved populations. Committee members also discussed the proposed project branding and asked if sustainability could more directly be incorporated into the name and logo. Comments on the survey included asking how people want to travel and asking about how people travel in different seasons. Amstutz noted the Town is working on mapping application for people to put in location-specific feedback on transportation issues.

Amstutz noted they will plan to do the focus groups virtually in the coming weeks.

6. Existing Conditions Overview.

This agenda item was covered in Agenda Item #4, above.

7. Closing and Next Steps.

Amstutz said another committee meeting will be planned for next month, in May.